



TESTIMONY OF MARLENE F. MCGANN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR on HB 6262

Good Afternoon, Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee:

I am Marlene McGann, and I have been the Director of the Meriden and Wallingford Substance Abuse Council for nearly 15 years. During that time I have witnessed the growth of the Regional Action Council system to cover every town and city in the state. A unique aspect of the system is the ability to work collaboratively on a statewide basis while still maintaining grassroots connections to our communities. It is that local, grassroots connection that allows the RACs to bring financial resources to our communities.

HB 6262 proposes redistricting the RACs into five large regions and claims a revenue neutral impact. This is not correct - in fact this proposal would be revenue negative for our communities and the state as a whole.

From 2005-2009 the Regional Action Councils have leveraged \$6.5 million dollars in federal funding through Drug Free Communities, Mentoring and STOP alcohol grants. During this same period the RACS have brought in local funding totaling more than \$8 million dollars. That is a total of \$14.5 million dollars that goes directly to communities for programs.

In this current year 10 RACs have Drug Free Community grants, 3 RACs have STOP grants and 3 have Community Mentoring grants. Given the requirements of the grant contracts, these funds could be in jeopardy of being cancelled, as they cannot be transferred to new entities. This year alone we are talking about nearly \$1.9 million dollars in federal funds that are brought to CT.

If Bill 6262 is passed, the ability of 5 RACs to apply for similar federal dollars in the future will be diminished by nearly two-thirds. We will go from applying for 14 grants to 5 grants. This will negatively impact our local communities for years to come, making CT less competitive for grants and contracts.

RACs also seek funding from community foundations, United Ways and civic organizations to support programs and services at the local level, often bringing in several local partners through collaboration and the provision of technical assistance. From 2005-2009 this funding exceeded \$8 million dollars. In your packet is a letter from a local United Way that states "this realignment is a giant step backwards and ignores the reasons why regional action councils were formed in the first place... The allocation ... each year is a small, local investment made by our donors because it provides a very tangible local result. Those same donors have proven difficult to maintain for more regionalized efforts..." (James Ieronimo, CPO of the M/W United Way) Local foundations and civic organizations take pride and ownership of local programs and that support is in jeopardy when combining regions into 30 and 40 towns.

2005 to 2009: Federal \$6,487,368 + Local \$8,065,925 = \$14,553,293 dollars to our communities

14 sub-regional RACs make fiscal sense



United Way
of Meriden and Wallingford

January 30, 2009

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee:

RE: Regional Action Councils

The United Way of Meriden and Wallingford and I, personally, work with the Meriden and Wallingford Substance Abuse Council, our regional action council, and strongly oppose the proposed redistricting of the councils for substance abuse. It does not follow that a system, designed to respond to local needs, will be expanded in such a way that our two towns will be no more than a small piece of a much larger group. After developing the mechanisms and support that respond to our local issues and becoming embedded in the fabric of our local response to substance abuse and its prevention, this realignment is a giant step backwards and ignores the reasons why regional action councils were formed in the first place.

The United Way of Meriden and Wallingford funds the B.A.B.E.S. initiative and helped to expand it to include the elementary schools in both of our towns. The allocation of \$9,000 each year is a small, local investment made by our donors because it provides a very tangible local result. Those same donors have proven difficult to maintain for more regionalized efforts such as those by the larger, national charities.

The local presence of MAWSAC is cemented by their work with Soy Unica! Soy Latina!, our mother and daughter nights out (which we fund at \$19,000 each year to their collaborator) and our dependence on MAWSAC personnel to sit on our advisory groups and help spend our donor investments wisely. Recently, as this United Way collaborated with MidState Medical Center on a needs assessment for the two towns, it was MAWSAC that provided key support and information in a project that will direct the programs in these towns for the next years.

During these fragile economic periods, we must not act as if they will last forever and risk what we have accomplished over the past 20 years. If we believe that it will be too difficult to sustain this local presence and effort, we should also know that it will be improbable that we will ever recapture it or recreate it after it has lost its local presence and support.

We do not want to lose the support and the voice of Meriden and Wallingford in prevention services and hope you agree.



James J. Ieronimo

Chief Professional Officer

Captain Frank B. Lewandowski, Retired
Meriden Police Department
49 Long Meadow Drive
Meriden, CT 06450-6928



Dear Senator Harris:

I am now retired after serving as a police officer with the Meriden Police Department for thirty-six years. A good part of my career was spent investigating or supervising drug investigations. I not only did this strictly for the Meriden Police Department but I also was assigned as an undercover investigator with the South Central Regional Task Force for two years. I was also assigned as a supervisor to the Statewide Narcotics Task Force for about two years. I also went on special assignment with the Drug Enforcement Agency to conduct an investigation.

As my career progressed and found myself in a senior leadership position, one of my assignments was to attend meetings of the Meriden and Wallingford Substance Abuse Council (MAWSAC). After attend only a few meetings it became apparent to me that this organization was truly unique.

They vigorously sought out areas of concern in the communities and developed plans to address the problems. Because of the size of the area MAWSAC served they could tailor the plan to be community specific not unlike community policing. They could quickly interface with agencies that could provide specific professional assistance if that was necessary.

MAWSAC became involved with developing specific programs to make citizens aware of problems such as the abuse of inhalants, teen gambling as well as substance abuse. They also gathered community specific information when requested by the State of Connecticut or the Federal Government. This information was not being captured by any other source.

MAWSAC is not only involved with problems of young people but they have identified specific areas of concern for the elderly and minority sectors of Meriden and Wallingford.

MAWSAC does this by finding the funding sources necessary to meet these challenges. These sources are a combination of Federal, State and private sector funding. Because of MAWSAC's ability to quickly identify and adapt to a need they often obtain funds that other agencies cannot.

The Meriden and Wallingford Substance Abuse Council became very important to me. So much so that even after my retirement I continued my affiliation with it on a volunteer basis.

Captain Frank B. Lewandowski, Retired
Meriden Police Department
49 Long Meadow Drive
Meriden, CT 06450-6928



Having the privilege to serve the public as I did working my entire adult life in government I learned much. The hard economic times we now face are not the first time I saw budget cuts. These cuts often led to a reduction of personnel and the consolidation of programs. "Pop" fraises were used to soften the devastating effects of these actions. One I remember clearly is "you have to learn to do more with less." My experience taught me that at the end of the day you did less with less and the negative impact was large.

It is because of what I have learned that I am strongly opposed to the proposed redistricting of the regional action councils for substance abuse. It has been proven to me that the RAC system developed responses to local needs and each RAC is an integral part of the infrastructure of the locally based organizations in the community. Local control allows for the development of solutions essential to combat substance abuse and fostering prevention initiatives that are responsive to the communities they serve.

Sincerely,

Frank B. Lewandowski



BOARD OF EDUCATION

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**MERIDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MERIDEN, CONNECTICUT**

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Mary N. Cortright
Superintendent of Schools

Robert J. Angeli
*Associate Superintendent
for Instruction*

Glen A. Lamontagne
*Assistant Superintendent,
Finance and Administration*

February 2, 2009

Senator Harris, Rep. Ritter, and Members of the Public Health Committee:

RE: REGIONAL ACTION COUNCILS

During these very tough economic times, all of us have to scrutinize where are funds are going and how we can allocate them for the best possible use while sustaining the integrity of our work and holding true to our mission.

I understand that The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) has proposed that the current system of 14 regional action councils be redistricted to 5 "super" councils. This would mean, apparently, that the current Meriden and Wallingford Substance Abuse Council would be in a service area of 36 towns and nearly 900,000 people. The area would cover all of Middlesex County, 5 towns around Ansonia, New Haven, and 14 surrounding towns – plus Meriden/Wallingford.

The Meriden and Wallingford Substance Abuse Council (MAWSAC) has worked closely with our Meriden community since 1992, not only doing needs assessments and advocating for the area at the state level, but also providing unique programming with local partners. Local programs complement what we do in the schools with programs like B.A.B.E.S. that bring the anti-drug message to first graders in an age-appropriate, creative, and informative manner. Soy Unica! Soy Latina! is another valuable MAWSAC program that celebrates Latino girls, promoting positive self-esteem and strengthening mother-daughter relationships. MAWSAC has worked very closely with me in the schools also providing after-school activities that I would otherwise not be able to provide my students. These are only a sample of what MAWSAC provides to this community.

I have worked with this regional action council since 1992, first as an assistant principal at the middle school, then as a principal at the elementary, and currently as superintendent. Please consider the importance of the close community ties and relationships that smaller councils offer to the health, vitality and uniqueness of each area and do not redistrict what has become an integral part of the infrastructure of our locally based organizations in the community. Local control and local solutions are essential to combating substance abuse and fostering prevention initiatives that are responsive to our community.

Sincerely,

Mary Noonan Cortright
Superintendent of Schools

MidState Medical Center

 HARTFORD HEALTHCARE

435 Lewis Avenue
Meriden, CT 06451
January 26, 2009

Senator Jonathon Harris
State Representative Elizabeth Ritter
Members of the Public Health Committee:
State Capitol
Hartford, CT

RE: REGIONAL ACTION COUNCILS

I have forwarded a letter of opposition to the proposed redistricting of the regional action councils under separate cover. In this letter, I would like to point out some fiscal realities. I have worked with and been a board member of the Meriden and Wallingford Substance Abuse Council (MAWSAC), this area's regional action council, since its inception and I **strongly** oppose the proposed redistricting of the regional action councils for substance abuse.

For more than 20 years, the RAC system has developed in response to local needs and each RAC has become an **integral** part of the infrastructure of locally based organizations. The Regional Action Councils are also a good source of funding for the state of Connecticut.

The total amount of funding leveraged by the Regional Action Councils in fiscal years 2005-2009 reaches more than \$18 million dollars. More than \$6 million dollars in federal funding was brought to Connecticut for projects and services at the local levels. RACs are able to apply for federal Drug Free Communities, Mentoring, and STOP grants by virtue of their positions as **community-based** public/private partnerships.

In addition to federal dollars, RACs partner with local foundations, businesses, and municipalities to bring an additional \$8 million dollars into their respective communities for local initiatives.

2005-2009	
Federal dollars	\$6,487,368
Local dollars	\$8,065,925
In-kind donations	\$3,563,580

Total dollars to support local initiatives \$18,116,873

I would also pose the reality that much of this money will be compromised if the "local" becomes regional. Thank you for the opportunity to share our views and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Lynn A. Faria
Director, Community Relations/Community Wellness

MidState Medical Center

 HARTFORD HEALTHCARE

435 Lewis Avenue
Meriden, CT 06451
January 26, 2009

Senator Jonathon Harris
State Representative Elizabeth Ritter
Members of the Public Health Committee:
State Capitol
Hartford, CT

RE: REGIONAL ACTION COUNCILS

I have worked with and been a board member of the Meriden and Wallingford Substance Abuse Council (MAWSAC), this area's regional action council, since its inception and I **strongly** oppose the proposed redistricting of the regional action councils for substance abuse.

For more than 20 years, the RAC system has developed in response to local needs and each RAC has become an **integral** part of the infrastructure of locally based organizations. Locally, MAWSAC has identified and addressed needs specific to this area. Its innovative programs include:

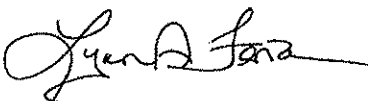
- ¡Soy Unica! ¡Soy Latina! a bilingual campaign for girls ages 9-14 and their mothers and other caregivers. As a public education campaign, ¡Soy Unica! ¡Soy Latina! helps these girls build their own self-esteem, mental health, decision-making and assertiveness skills to prevent the harmful consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. Hundreds have participated in this event over the last seven years.
- B.A.B.E.S. (Beginning Awareness Basic Education Studies). This is a nationally recognized primary prevention program designed to help children develop positive living skills. Thousands of first grade students have benefited by this program.
- Parranda held for the past 15 years with hundreds attending this alcohol-free Hispanic holiday celebration.
- "Mocktails and More" holiday season booklet available on the website.
- REACH after-school program with the Meriden Board of Education, teaching alternative activities and providing appropriate role-modeling.

There are so many more programs and services that MAWSAC has developed locally. This agency has evidenced the fact that local control and local solutions are essential to combating substance abuse and fostering prevention initiatives that are responsive to our community.

MidState Medical Center works with and supports MAWSAC in a variety of ways as a sponsor and volunteer. We also understand that RACs are revenue producers in the state and have procured over \$14 million in federal, private, and local funding for use at the sub-regional and municipal level. These funds will be in jeopardy if 14 RACS are merged into five. This would have a devastating impact on the best practice that has been developed in each area.

I urge you to deny this attempt at emasculating our local substance abuse efforts.

Sincerely,



Lynn A. Faria
Director, Community Relations/Community Wellness

WALLINGFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Health Services Department
141 Hope Hill Road
Wallingford, CT 06492

Senator Harris, Rep. Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee:

RE: REGIONAL ACTION COUNCILS

I have worked with the regional action council since 2005 and I strongly oppose/s the proposed redistricting of the regional action councils for substance abuse. For more than 20 years the RAC system has developed in response to local needs and each RAC has become an integral part of the infrastructure of locally based organizations in the community. Local control and local solutions are essential to combating substance abuse and fostering prevention initiatives that are responsive to our community.

The Wallingford School District works with and supports MAWSAC with funding and collaboration that provides program education and services to the children and staff in the Wallingford schools and community.

I do not think I would be actively involved in the Council if it covered 36 towns and nor do I believe that our local needs would be met if the current system of 14 regional action councils is redistricted to 5. I am asking you to seriously consider the ramifications of this action and decide against the redistricting to 5 councils.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Neelon, RN, MS
Nurse Coordinator
Wallingford Public Schools

January 28, 2009

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee,

I have worked with the Meriden Wallingford Substance Abuse Council for over 10 years and the regional work in the Meriden/Wallingford region has made a tremendous impact due to the close relationships that has developed through organizations. Both Marlene McGann and Christelle Aube are well known on a first name basis because they have been able to collaborate with important organizations such as Meriden Children First Initiative, Midstate Medical Center, The Universal Health care Foundation, New Opportunities, the Meriden Board of Education to name a few.

Marlene and Christelle have been able to promote and educate board members in these organizations on the effects and alcoholism, smoking and have focused on prevention. Their knowledge and expertise in these areas allow them to offer a workshop, which has always resulted in a large turnout again due to the personal contacts and relationship with people and organizations in both Meriden and Wallingford. These close relationships are key because the information is brought back to the people they work closely with. The attendees are diverse; Police Officers, Nurses, Community Organizers, Teachers, Social Workers, Principals, Directors on Various Boards to name a few. The education that they receive is being brought to the population they serve. The Soy Unica conference in Meriden always turns out over 200 people because they have been able to network with many in Meriden and Wallingford. This event has been instrumental in allowing mothers and daughters to work together to build self-esteem, confidence and most importantly bond through open communication, which is an area that affects many teenagers in our school systems.

MAWSAC's continued efforts have also helped the Latino population in there annual Parranda; a live musical event with Hispanic food and music with over 250 people attending every year. This is a fun, cultural event that spreads the message that everyone can have fun without alcohol. The turnout for this event continues to grow year after year.

My initial interest with MAWSAC started in 2001 when I was Miss Connecticut and promoted Alcohol Abuse and Prevention throughout the state of Connecticut. I spoke to students primarily in Meriden due to being a Meriden resident. I then joined the board and was impressed at the dedicated people on the board and their prevention efforts. It would be unfortunate if MAWSAC were part of a 36 towns because the success of MAWSAC has been a result of the hard work and dedication in developing close connections in Meriden and Wallingford. Both Marlene and Christelle are known on a first name basis and well respected in our community due to their networking which has been so instrumental in the productivity of their work. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: 203-815-5680.

Sincerely,

Marissa Cardona
Community Organizer
Universal Healthcare Foundation /Meriden Children First Initiative



GALLAGHER TRAVEL SHOPPE

February 2, 2009

TO: Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and
members of the Public Health Committee

FROM: Judi Gallagher
Secretary/Meriden-Wallingford Substance Abuse Council

I have been on the Board of Directors of the Meriden/Wallingford Substance Council for several years. Marlene McGann, our Executive Director, has brought to our attention the proposal that you have put forth to redistrict the regional action councils for substance abuse. I am strongly opposed to such proposal on behalf of MAWSAC, who would be redistricted to include towns totally out of its geographic area. The current RAC system, which has been in place for more than twenty years, has proven to be more than successful. It is important to keep this system in place so that each area can combat substance abuse and foster prevention initiatives that are responsive to their communities.

As a board member, I would not want to sit on a RAC which encompassed towns out of my immediate area. I am interested in preventive measures that will effect Meriden and Wallingford and not Ansonia, New Haven and Middlesex County. I have been a business owner in Wallingford for thirty-seven years and work hard within the community to promote programs which will benefit our area people and their needs. Although I have nothing against the people who live in these other areas, their needs would be completely different from Meriden and Wallingford.

Please reconsider your proposal to redistrict the regional councils and allow us all to continue the fine work which is being done in our communities within our RACS.

369 CENTER STREET, WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT 06492
Telephone: 203-265-2856 - Fax: 203-284-9152 - E-mail: gallaghertravel@juno.com



City of Meriden, Connecticut

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
HEALTH DIVISION

BETH VUMBACO, RN, MS
DIRECTOR

165 MILLER STREET
MERIDEN, CT 06450-4283
TELEPHONE (203) 630-4226
FAX (203) 639-0039

January 27, 2009

The Honorable Christopher Donovan
Legislative Office Building, Room 4100
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Chris
Dear Representative Donovan:

I have had the pleasure of working with the Meriden/Wallingford Regional Action Council (RAC) since 1992 and the City of Meriden Department of Health and Human Services strongly opposes the proposed redistricting of the regional action councils for substance abuse prevention. Each RAC has become an integral part of the infrastructure of locally based organizations in the community. Local control and local solutions are essential to combating substance abuse and fostering prevention initiatives that are responsive to our community.

The Meriden/Wallingford RAC plays a leadership role in helping Meriden assess our substance abuse prevention needs and obtain important funding which greatly helps all of our citizens receive necessary services and education.

Sincerely,

Beth Vumbaco
Beth Vumbaco, R.N., M.S.
Director of Health/Human Services

cc: Denise Keating, Youth Services Division Manager
Senator Jonathan Harris, Chair of Public Health Committee
Representative Elizabeth Ritter, Chair of Public Health Committee

Meriden Adult, Continuing and Vocational Education

January 27, 2009

Senator Harris, Rep. Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee:

RE: REGIONAL ACTION COUNCILS

I have served on the Board of Directors of our regional action council since 2004 and I strongly oppose the proposed redistricting of the regional action councils for substance abuse. For more than 20 years the RAC system has developed in response to local needs and each RAC has become an integral part of the infrastructure of locally based organizations in the community. Local control and local solutions are essential to combating substance abuse and fostering prevention initiatives that are responsive to our community.

The Meriden Public Schools collaborates with MAWSAC with a number of programs that have benefited the citizens of our community, especially our students. Local programs like B.A.B.E.S., Soy Unica! Soy Latina!, Meriden mini-grants, Parranda, mother-daughter events, after school improvisation, smoking education and more may not be able to continue. MAWSAC being a locally based organization allows for this kind of focused programming that targets our population. Redistricting from 14 regional action councils to 5 "super" councils would jeopardize this kind of specialized programming.

Please reject this redistricting proposal that may end the years of extremely worthwhile, preventative programming that has benefited thousands of youngsters in our school district and the Meriden community as a whole, in this critical fight against substance abuse.

Sincerely,

Donald H. Friedman
Director of Adult Education
Meriden Public Schools
22 Liberty Street
Meriden, CT 06450
(203) 630-4190



HARTFORD HEALTHCARE

Behavioral Health Services
883 Paddock Avenue
Meriden, CT 06450
Phone: (203) 630-5280
Fax: (203) 630-5335
www.rushford.org

Dear Senator Harris, Rep. Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee:

I have worked with several Connecticut regional action councils for over 12 years and as a Certified Prevention Professional, I strongly oppose the proposed redistricting of the regional action councils for substance abuse. For more than 20 years the RAC system has supported local needs and each RAC has become an integral part of the infrastructure of locally based organizations in the community. The future of the Meriden and Wallingford Substance Abuse Council (MAWSAC) and the 13 other Regional Action Councils (RACs) for Substance Abuse Prevention across Connecticut have been placed in jeopardy. I am addressing the bill raised by the Public Health Committee on January 23rd- AAC Regional Action Councils. This bill proposes the dissolution of 14 RACs entities to 5 regional offices. This is a poor alternative to grassroots prevention that's been successfully ongoing in Connecticut for over 18 years. Proposed "regionalization" of the RACs is not cost neutral as DMHAS claims in its proposal to the Public Health Committee. It could, in fact, cost the state 100's of thousands of dollars as the RACs Drug Free Communities funding would be in jeopardy. Presently, 10 of the 14 RACs are Drug Free Communities generally receiving \$100,000 per year for up to ten years; and a number of the RACs also are recipients of SAMHSA Mentoring Grants of \$75,000 per year and STOP Act Grants to prevent underage drinking for \$50,000 for up to 4 years. The common purpose of these grants is to provide funding to existing DFC grantees to support development and/or expansion of new community coalitions that are focused on substance abuse prevention. DMHAS has said that the role of the RACs is planning. The RACs do much more than planning. The local partnerships RACs have fostered through the years are essential to continued grassroots efforts within the communities they serve. For the past three years MAWSAC has partnered with Rushford to offer monthly Mother and Daughter Evenings Out, a primary prevention initiative aimed to increase communication between middle school girls and their mothers. Additionally, these partnerships make it possible for RACs to collect the data that is essential to fulfill the planning function for DMHAS. These partnerships and the ability to meet the planning function would be greatly at risk if RACs were to lose their grassroots initiatives. DMHAS is concerned that RACs do not need 14 "administrators." Directors of RACs do far more than administrate. They are front line prevention professionals who, in addition to running their organizations, do community outreach, coalition building, research, presentations, trainings, as well as seek funds and other resources for the communities they serve.

I am asking that you strongly encourage the leadership of the Public Health Committee **not** to support An Act Concerning the Regional Action Councils. I am most grateful for your strong support of MAWSAC and the RAC system.

Sincerely

Sheryl Sprague, CPP-R
Prevention Manager
Rushford Center

Building healthier communities

MIDDLETOWN • GLASTONBURY • MERIDEN • PORTLAND • SHORELINE

February 4, 2009

RE: REGIONAL ACTION COUNCILS

Senator Harris, Rep. Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee:

**girls
inc.**

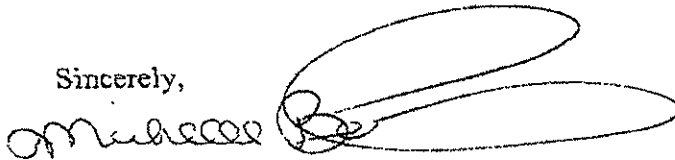
Inspiring All Girls
to be Strong,
Smart and Bold

I represent Girls Incorporated of Meriden, a non-profit organization that provides compensatory programs for girls ages 2-18. I have had the pleasure of working with the regional action council for five years now and I strongly oppose the proposed redistricting of the regional action councils for substance abuse. The support given to the community through the regional action council is much needed and members of our organization have benefited directly from the fine work they do day to day. Redistricting is not a solution for the type of work done by this council. I feel very strongly that such a move will only hurt what is needed on a local basis. Regionalizing does not make it easy to reach out more into communities, local control and local solutions are essential to combating substance abuse and fostering prevention initiatives that are responsive to our community.

For more than twenty years the Regional Action Council system has participated in the local needs and each Regional Action Council has become an integral part of the infrastructure of locally based organizations in the community. It is a huge disservice to even consider such a proposal. The long term affects that will come from redistricting will set the hard work done by the council for years to come. That would be a shame and a complete waste of resources.

Girls Incorporated of Meriden works with and supports MAWSAC through programming and collaboration on many different projects.

Sincerely,



Michelle Bourdeau
Executive Director



John Barry School
124 Columbia St.
Meriden CT 06451
203.237.4743
Fax: 203.630.4212



Benjamin Franklin School
426 West Main St.
Meriden CT 06451
203.238.2316
Fax: 203.630-4055

Senator Jonathon Harris, Chair Public Health Committee
State Representative Elizabeth Ritter, Chair Public Health Committee
Public Health Committee
Legislative Office Building, Rm. 3000
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: REGIONAL ACTION COUNCILS

I am the Director of Meriden's Family Resource Centers and have worked with the Meriden/Wallingford Substance Abuse Council for four years. I presently sit on its Board of Directors as well. I am an opponent of the proposed redistricting of the regional action councils for substance abuse. Regionalization presents many challenges. It most likely will face obstacles to integrating and coordinating services, and will definitely require enhanced levels of information sharing, collaboration and dissemination of resources which can actually lead to increased inefficiency and cost in the long run. There is no doubt in my mind that regionalization is not in the best interest of the people that this council serves.

Meriden Family Resource Centers have worked closely with MAWSAC to provide much-needed activities and services to the families and children of the schools that I serve. Their outreach, however, goes way beyond these schools. What it has done here in these schools has a positive 'ripple' effect throughout our town. Each town is unique in its makeup and therefore, its needs. MAWSAC truly has its finger on the pulse of this local community and has responded accordingly time and time again.

Please keep the RAC regions the way they are. I believe it's in the best interests of all.

Catherine R. Battista

Catherine R. Battista, Director
Meriden Family Resource Center

c: File



HARTFORD HEALTHCARE

Administrative Offices

883 Paddock Avenue
Meriden, CT 06450

Phone: (203) 630-5280

Fax: (203) 634-2799

February 5, 2009

Public Health Committee
Room 3000, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee:

Rushford has worked with the Meriden and Wallingford Substance Abuse Council (MAWSAC) for nearly eight years in the delivery of prevention and treatment programs for at-risk youth and families. We strongly oppose the redistricting of the regional action councils.

MAWSAC has garnered more than \$400,000 in federal and local funding for prevention activities in the Meriden and Wallingford communities and is an integral part of the infrastructure of locally based community organizations. The potential loss of these funds will outweigh the savings in state dollars by regionalization

Local control and local solutions are essential to combating substance abuse and ensuring prevention initiatives reflect and address the needs of our communities.

A redistricting of the regional action councils will serve to dilute the effectiveness of local prevention programs and lead to an increase in treatment-related costs to communities.

Sincerely,

Jeff Walter
President & CEO

Building healthier communities since 1975.